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**DECISION**



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES**  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

*[Claim for Incentive Payment Involved With Transfer of Household Goods]*  
FILE: B-193943      DATE: October 15, 1979

MATTER OF: Airman Andrew G. Way, USAF

**DIGEST:** Although the language of the Joint Travel Regulations appears to preclude participation in the "do-it-yourself" program by members transferring household goods via borrowed privately owned vehicle, such a conclusion would be inconsistent with the purposes of the program. Thus, we agree with PDTATAC that the term "privately owned," as found in 1 JTR paragraph M8400, was used merely as a means of distinguishing the vehicle in question from rental and commercial vehicles, and does not require ownership of the vehicle by the relocating member.

AG C00653

The question involved in this case is whether an armed services member may use a borrowed vehicle, rather than a vehicle the member owns, and still qualify for the incentive payment under the "do-it-yourself" household goods shipment program. The answer is yes.

The question was presented by the Accounting and Finance Officer, Castle Air Force Base, California, concerning an incentive payment claimed by Airman Andrew G. Way, USAF, and has been assigned Control No. 79-1 by the Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee.

DLC 03041

Pursuant to valid station transfer orders, Airman Way moved with his family from Chula Vista, California, to Merced, California. Prior to the move, he received counseling regarding the incentive payments available through the "do-it-yourself" shipment provisions of the Joint Travel Regulations and was authorized, in accordance with those provisions, to move his household goods by the use of a borrowed pickup truck. Upon submission of his voucher for reimbursement, however, Airman Way was refused the incentive payment on the ground that the provisions of the "do-it-yourself" program apply only when the member uses either a rental vehicle or one which he himself owns.

The "do-it-yourself" household goods shipment program for members of the Armed Forces was authorized pursuant to section 747

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of the Department of Defense Appropriation Act, 1976, Public Law 94-212, 90 Stat. 153, 176, and 37 U.S.C. 406 (1976). Implementing regulations can be found in Volume 1, Joint Travel Regulations (1 JTR), chapter 8, part H (change 239, March 1, 1977).

It appears that the program was instituted with a two-fold purpose: (1) to conserve Government funds by limiting incentive payments to 75 percent of what it would have cost the Government to ship member's goods, and (2) to provide a convenience and extra income to members choosing this method. See 1 JTR, paragraph M8400.

The program is based on an incentive principle, members receiving payments upon election, incident to transfer orders, to move their household goods by other than Government means. Paragraph M8400 of the JTR provides that such allowances are available for movement of household goods by "privately owned or rental vehicle," which is the same language used by section 747 of Public Law 94-212. The Finance and Accounting Officer questions whether the incentive payment may be made in this case because Appendix J, 1 JTR, defines "privately owned motor vehicle" as one "owned by the member," and if that definition is strictly applied, members moving household goods via borrowed vehicle do not qualify for incentive payments.

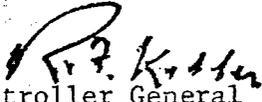
The Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee (PDTATAC), which was responsible for preparing 1 JTR, chapter 8, part H, interprets the term "privately owned," as used in paragraph M8400 as not intended to require ownership of the vehicle by the member. Rather, in their opinion, the term was used to distinguish the vehicle in question from a commercial or rental vehicle.

We agree with the Committee's interpretation. A contrary interpretation would be inconsistent with the purposes of the program. A greater allowable benefit to members should result in a greater incentive for members to "do-it-yourself" and, ultimately, in reduced Government liability for payment of shipment costs. Disqualification of members using borrowed privately owned vehicles would, conversely, be in the best interest of neither the members nor the Government.

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Concern has been expressed regarding the possibility of increased Government liability for automobile accidents if members are permitted to drive third party vehicles on Air Force installations. We note in this regard that existing Air Force regulations require that Air Force members have "adequate" insurance coverage, and today's decision in no way advocates relaxation of this requirement. While we recognize that enforcement of applicable insurance regulations may become more difficult under the limited circumstances represented by the present case, such an administrative burden is insufficient, in our opinion, to warrant exclusion of Airman Way and other similarly situated members from participation in the "do-it-yourself" program.

Accordingly, Airman Way should be paid the applicable allowances incident to shipment of his household goods under the "do-it-yourself" program.

  
Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States